

How to mine your network

Your network is a powerful tool. Mine it and you could strike gold with your next career move.

Drilling down to former colleagues, friends, industry contacts, your dentist or hairdresser, and even your old drinking buddy from university who has grown powerful in his or her industry could ease your path into your dream role.

What's the betting if you tell your dentist or hairdresser that you're looking for a new role and your skills are XY or Z, their very next client will work in [that industry](#)? It happens, and the connections that occur as a result can be of lasting benefit to both parties.

But don't expect it to just happen. It can be really hard work. And like American president Thomas Jefferson once said, "The harder I work, the more luck I have."

So start digging deep into your network with the following tips:

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- **Tip 1.** Examine your social network with a fine tooth comb. Who knows who? Can they introduce you to someone significant in your industry?
- **Tip 2.** Make contact. "Do what the Americans call 'reaching out'", says Peter Noblet, senior regional director at Hays. Even the most senior people find it flattering to be asked for help, even if people are generally reticent to do so.
- **Tip 3.** Squeeze your social network. If you don't want to make it public that you're looking for jobs, send private messages to anyone you believe can help, says Noblet. Let them know you want five minutes of their time and that you'll stick to that time limit.

- **Tip 4.** Mine online. Look and see who your influential online friends are connected with and get involved in their networks where possible. Read plenty of articles and forums to see who the thought leaders are in your industry and befriend them.
- **Tip 5.** Take advantage of social situations. Do you go to school, sports clubs, or other events? Talk to the people around you. There is bound to be someone who would be helpful to you professionally. The father or mother of little Jacob or Violet could well be the CEO of a company you'd love to work for.
- **Tip 6.** Don't be a wallflower. We know [it's hard for some people](#), but work the room at networking events. Try to say hello and make contact with everyone.
- **Tip 7.** Ask for meetings. It doesn't have to be in person. A [phone or Skype](#) meeting is better than nothing. If you don't ask you don't get, and the more allies you can enlist to your job search the better.
- **Tip 8.** Ask about the people you want to get close to. Find out about the other person first. It's flattering, but also helps you determine how the he or she might be helpful to you. Once you've got the conversation going, drop in a little about what you're looking for.
- **Tip 9.** Stay organised. Set yourself up a spreadsheet that allows you to track contacts for your job search. If you want to do this well look for basic Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software or apps, or use the contact management database template in Microsoft Access if you have it.
- **Tip 10.** [Research the company](#) and industry people in your network operate within, so that when you make contact you have some interesting questions to ask.